

U.S. Refugee Aid in Laos Found to Help Guerrillas

By JOHN W. FINNEY

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—The General Accounting Office has concluded that much of the money allocated for assisting refugees has been used to finance paramilitary operations in Laos directed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The accounting office, which controls the disbursement of public funds, said that almost half the funds of the Agency for International Development for a village health program were being used to support military activities.

Two censored reports by the watchdog body were made public today by Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts in his capacity as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees.

The reports were critical of the management of programs for assisting refugees and civilian war casualties in Laos.

The accounting office said official statistics on war victims in Laos were incomplete. From 1967 through 1969, the aid agency reported 12,032 civilian war casualties. The subcommittee said there had been 30,000 casualties since early 1969.

Refugee programs were said to have been poorly managed,

with the aid mission in Vientiane relegating responsibility largely to the field.

The accounting office said medical drugs supplied for refugees disappeared when they were shipped to Laos.

Refugee villages were found to be overcrowded, congested, water supplies and health facilities. The mortality rate in the villages was said to be high, in some cases 250 per cent above standards set by the aid agency.

Funds Used as Cover

In the opinion of the subcommittee staff, the reports for the first time provided official documentation of the extent to which refugee programs had been used as a cover by the C.I.A. for financing its military activities.

At the direction of the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency has been supporting a 30,000-man guerrilla army of Meo and Yao tribesmen against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces in northern Laos. As part of this program, refugee support has been given to the dependents of the guerrillas.

Responding to the reports,

a spokesman for aid headquarters said the primary responsibility for refugee relief rested with the Laotian Government. He acknowledged that some assistance went to guerrilla forces, but said that a larger percentage was given to dependents.

The sections in the reports dealing with assistance to the guerrillas were censored. But the subcommittee said in a statement that the reports documented its earlier findings that "until relatively recent times the refugee program was simply a euphemism to cover

American assistance to persons who agreed to take up arms against the Pathet Lao."

In the last fiscal year, \$17-million was provided for refugee assistance in Laos. At a news conference Senator Kennedy said about 50 per cent had been used for guerrilla operations in Laos.

As of July, 1970, there were 279 villages with more than 280,000 persons receiving refugee assistance. Of this total, some 45 per cent, or well over 100,000 persons, were estimated by the subcommittee to be in the category of guerrillas and their dependents.

McCloskey Says U.S. Hid Extent of Laos Bombings

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 21—Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr. said today that the State Department had deliberately concealed the extent to which American planes had bombed villages in northern Laos.

The California Republican, has threatened to oppose President Nixon for the Republican nomination next year, made his charge, on the basis of a recent trip to Laos, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, headed by Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

The charge was quickly taken up by Senator Kennedy, who contended there was a direct relationship between the growth of Laotian refugees and the increases in American bombing in Northern Laos, starting in early 1969.

'Bloodbath' Is Seen

In opening a new series of hearings by his subcommittee, Senator Kennedy said that American military activities in Indochina, especially the unrestricted air war—were contributing to a "bloodbath" and

The Kennedy hearings, combined with hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on "how to end the war," were reviving the Vietnam debate on Capitol Hill, but with a new emphasis upon the morality of American actions.

"We cannot allow the specter of a highly dubious 'bloodbath' of the future to blind us from that is going on today—every day—in Vietnam and all of Indochina," Senator Kennedy said. "This 'bloodbath' started long ago—and we are part of it—and it will continue as long as the war continues, so long as efforts to end that war are avoided and delayed.

"No one here disagrees that the insurgents of Indochina are also contributing to this 'bloodbath.' But the question for most Americans today is how much longer will we tolerate policies by our Government which make easy the killing and maiming of millions?"

The Laos bombing charge, which Mr. McCloskey has been developing ever since he returned last weekend from an eight-day trip to Indochina with Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, following the pattern of questioning the morality of United States involvement in Indochina. The Congressmen spent three days in Laos.

State Department View

In testimony last spring and summer before the Kennedy subcommittee, the State Department maintained that United States bombing operations in northern Laos were carefully controlled to avoid hitting villages. The department also contended that bombing had been a relatively minor factor in generating refugees.

Mr. McCloskey reported that much the same position had

been taken by G. McMurtrie Godley, the American Ambassador to Laos, and his staff at a dinner in the Ambassador's home on April 13. But the next day, he said, "a young political officer" in the embassy suggested that he obtain a United States Information Service report on a survey of attitudes among Laotian refugees, taken in June and July.

Mr. McCloskey made public a copy of the report on interviews with more than 200 refugees from 96 villages in the Plaine des Jarres area in northern Laos. The survey concluded that "the bombing is clearly the most compelling reason for moving," that 75 per cent of 190 Laotians interviewed said their homes had been damaged by bombing and that 76 per cent said the bombing attacks had taken place in 1969.

The hearing room was packed with Vietnam veterans who are on Washington this week to protest the war. Senator Kennedy clashed repeatedly with William E. Colby, who is in charge of the pacification and rural development program in South Vietnam, over whether there had been an improvement in the refugee situation.

Mr. Colby said the refugee problem had decreased "enormously" in the last two or three years, partly because of increasing security in the countryside and partly because of the long-term efforts of the Saigon Government to rebuild a wartorn society.

But Senator Kennedy maintained that 150,000 new refugees had been created since last November, largely as a result of United States supported military and relocation operations by the Saigon Government. The refugee rate, the Senator maintained, was now running at the highest level since the Communist Tet offensive in the spring of 1968.

'A Lie,' Veteran Says

When Mr. Colby observed at one point that "the single most important source of refugees in the past three years has been the Tet offensive," goans went up iv mtemnofrhate Nhdg up from the Vietnam veterans, and one shouted out: "That's a lie!"

The veterans groaned when Dennis Doolin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in supporting a Colby assertion that the military was under instructions to restrict firepower so as to protect the civilian population, said American forces were "precluded" from conducting "reconnaissance by fire."

When Senator Kennedy asked whether there might be another definition for the tactic of firing into an area to flush out the enemy, several of the veterans shouted out "Murder!" and "Genocide!"

For the most part, however, the veterans listened in silence as Mr. Colby described the progress in the refugee and the Vietnamization programs. Occasionally, however, Senator Kennedy had to gavel them to silence.



Associated Press

Ambassador William E. Colby, head of the pacification program in Saigon, before the Senate subcommittee on refugees.

"agony" among "a growing number of civilians in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia."

Dip Reported in Viet Civil Toll

By JAMES DOYLE
Star Staff Writer

The Senate subcommittee on refugees was told today there has been a "significant decline" in the number of civilian war casualties in Vietnam since 1968.

But the subcommittee chairman, Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., accused the administration of "conveniently ignor-

ing" the level of civilian casualties in Laos, which he said has skyrocketed as a result of U.S. bombing there.

The optimistic picture in Vietnam was painted by William E. Colby, top civilian administrator for civil operations in the American command in Saigon.

Colby was the leadoff witness in two days of hearing before the Kennedy subcommittee on the problem of refugees and civilian war casualties in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Several other administration witnesses are scheduled, including Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William H. Sullivan, former ambassador to Laos, who will testify tomorrow, and Montague Stearns, deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Laos.

McCloskey Listed

Later today Rep. Paul N. McCloskey Jr., R-Calif., will brief the committee on his recent visit to Laos. He has said he will oppose President Nixon in next year's primaries unless administration policy in Indochina is changed.

Colby delivered 55 pages of testimony to the committee, generally indicating great progress in the handling of refugees and civilian casualties.

He said the administration is "in no way satisfied" with the reliability of casualty figures but that by any standard "civilian war casualties have both absolutely and proportionately declined very considerably from those of earlier years."

Decrease Cited

He cited figures indicating that the civilian casualties in Vietnam during 1970 amounted to 38,306, a decrease of 14,000

from the previous year and less than half the figure for 1968.

Colby's figures indicated that of the total, 8,607 were "friendly inflicted"—caused by U.S. and South Vietnamese shelling and bombing.

Another 22,049 were "enemy inflicted"—caused by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong mines and mortars.

The remaining 7,650 casualties were listed as inflicted by "either side" from grenade explosions and gunfire.

Colby said the Vietnamese government has vastly improved its ability to care for refugees and casualties. The United States no longer runs the program but simply assists the Vietnamese government, he said.

5 Million Involved

His figures showed that since 1964 more than five million refugees and casualties have been "generated" in South Vietnam, out of a population of about 17 million.

He noted that U.S. air strikes and artillery fire have decreased markedly in the past year and this has eased the problem.

He also said the rural economy has revived and this has eased the food supply problem.

He acknowledged that "substantial social welfare needs" remain in Vietnam and that the war and "change in traditional family and village attitudes and the social disorganization in the urban slums" has generated "street boys, prostitutes and other disoriented elements."

In opening remarks Kennedy said that the level of civilian casualties and refugees continues unabated in the three-nation area of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; by "this measure we see that the war is scarcely winding down for the peoples directly in-

involved," he said.

American military activity "contributes heavily to this growing human toll — more than our government cares to admit," he said, pointing to unrestricted air war as a major cause.

Kennedy said that in the past year up to 1.5 million persons in Cambodia, almost one-third of the population, "have apparently become refugees and medical facilities are overburdened with civilian casualties."

In Laos, Kennedy said, "at least 700,000 persons" out of a population of 3 million have become refugees in recent years.

"The problem has been conveniently ignored by our government, and questions raised by members of Congress and others have gone unanswered," Kennedy said.

Little Change Seen

"Despite official statements to the contrary, there is much to suggest that the basic situation has changed very little in recent years."

"With each additional loss we should be reminded," Kennedy said, "that we can not allow the specter of a highly dubious 'blood bath' of the future to blind us from the blood bath that is going on today and every day in Vietnam and all of Indochina. Indochina" contribute to the blood bath, but argued that the question for Americans is: "How much longer will we fuel and finance what our military planners so glibly call saturation bombings, protective reaction and close air support and other strategic labels, devoid of much moral restraint and responsibility, devoid of much apparent concern for the plight of civilians who continue to bear the brunt of this endless war?"